are not considering to increase the above mentioned booths in the State; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) 12, 994 STD/ ISD booths are functioning in Punjab at present.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Project to connect Village Panchayats in Assam and N.E. Region

8. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any project to connect telephonically every village Panchayat in Assam and other States of the N.E. Region, within a time-frame;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes Sir. The Government has a policy to provide public telephones in all the villages of the country.

(b) and (c)

Assam Circle:-It is planned to connect all the villages including Panchayat Villages in Assam by the end of IXth Plan. As on 31.10.97, total number of villages covered in Assam is 9127 out of 22,224.

2093 Gram Panchayats out of 2485, have already been covered by public telephone facility.

North East Circle: It is planned to connect all the villages including Panchayat villages in North East circle by the end of IXth plan. As on 31.10.97, in North East circle, total 3245 No. of villages have been covered with Public telephone facilities out of 14197 villages.

Total number of Village Panchayats in North East circle is 4347 and 2370 Panchayats have been connected.

बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में लगाये गये टॉवर

9. **श्री जर्नादन यादव:** क्या संचार मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में कुल कितने टॉवर लगाये गये हैं;

(ख) क्या यह सच है कि राज्य में जितने टॉवर लगाये गये हैं, उनमें से कोई भी काम नहीं कर रहा है और उन टॉवरों में लगायी गयी मशीन खराब पड़ी हैं; और

(ग) यदि हां, तो खराब मशीनों को कब तक बदल दिया जायेगा, यदि नहीं, तो इसके क्या कारण हैं?

संचार मंत्री (श्री बेनी प्रसाद वर्मा): (क) ग्रामीण सार्वजनिक टेलीफोनों की व्यवस्था करने के लिए बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में कुल 7, 476 टॉवर संस्थापित किए गए हैं;

(ख) जी नहीं, 12.11.97 की स्थिति के अनुसार केवल 72 बेस स्टेशन तथा 2,124 आर एस यू खराब पड़े हैं।

(ग) दोषपूर्ण बेस स्टेशनों तथा आर एस यू की क्रमिक रूप से मरम्मत की जाएगी।

Capacity of Telephone Exchanges in Bihar and Orissa

10. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the average number of persons being served under each Telephone exchange in Bihar and Orissa;

(b) the details of the national average in this regard; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to increase the capacity of all exchanges in these States?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) The average number of subscribers served by each exchanges is as follows:-

Bihar	424
Orissa	290
National Average	655

(c) Depending upon the registered demand in different areas new exchanges are opened or the capacity of existing exchanges is expanded.

New Post Offices in Assam

11. SHRIMATI BASANTI SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

'(a) whether it is a fact that a few new post offices have been sanctioned during the current financial year for Assam; and

(b) if so, the details and number of new post offices sanctioned for both urban and rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) New Post Offices have not yet been sanctioned for Assam Postal Circle.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Telephone facility at Panchayat Headquarters

12. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the decision taken earlier to provide telecommunication facility at each Panchayat Headquarter in the country is being implemented satisfactorily;

(b) if so, the progress made so far in this regard with particular reference to the North-Eastern States;

(c) if not, by when the above facilities are likely to be provided to all the Panchayat Headquarters;

(d) whether Government have reduced the budgetory allocation under the Head 'Village Panchayat Telephone' for the current year; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes Sir, The Department has enhanced the policy to cover all the villages of the country in the Panchayat villages.

(b) The status of total villages covered upto 7.11.97 is given in the statement (*see below*). As regards NE Region, the following is the status:—

Assam Circle:— Out of 2485 Village Panchayats, 2093 have been covered.

North East Circle:— Out of 4347 village Panchayats, 2370 have been covered.

State	Total No. of Panchayat	Panchayats with Telephone
Arunachal Pradesh	944	365
Manipur	429	359
Meghalaya	450	415
Mizoram	613	429
Nagaland	1001	387
Tripura	910	415
Total	4347	2370

(c) It is expected to cover all the Panchayat Headquarters in North East States by the end of IXth Five Year Plan.

(d) and (e) There is no reduction in the Budgetary allocation for this programme. The Government has granted Rs. 498 Crores under Cash and Rs. 200 Crores under Lease Procurement for the Village Public Telephone Programme this year.